
Esopus Riverfront – Access and Connections Study Riverfront Project Committee Meeting #1 May 8, 2019 Summary Meeting Notes

Committee Attendance:

Riverfront Project Committee (RPC): Mercedes Ross, RPC Chair; Shannon Harris, Supervisor; Amy Cahill; Margaret Phelan; Eli Schloss; Carol Carson-Tomassetti; Jim Banks; Dale Wolfield; Marion Zimmer; Diane Dintruff; Susan Barbarisi; Lisa Mance, Secretary

Heather Blaikie, Scenic Hudson, Rita Shaheen, Scenic Hudson

Planning Team: Matthew Rogers, Senior Planner, Laberge Group; Joshua Westfall, AICP, Planner, Laberge Group

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Ross at 5:01 PM.

Approval of Minutes: Carol Carson-Tomassetti moved, seconded by Margaret Phelan to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2019 Waterfront Advisory Board/Riverfront Project Committee Meeting, as written. The motion was carried by those members of the Waterfront Advisory Board.

Meeting Discussions:

Review of Existing Access and Site Draft Inventory Documents

Matt Rogers began with an overview (with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation) of the site visits conducted April 24, 2019, by members of the Committee, NYSDEC, Scenic Hudson (SH), and Laberge Group. The presentation included photographs of each site, including existing resources, deficiencies/poor conditions, and opportunities. Maps illustrating constraints and other current conditions were also displayed and reviewed.

Black Creek Preserve:

- Matt Rogers gave a brief overview of the Black Creek Preserve site visit, including existing site uses, conditions, constraints, and opportunities.
- Joshua Westfall spoke on the maps, describing the constraints, the current flood zones and future inundation assumptions related to Sea Level Rise (SLR), and other features of the Park. Supervisor Harris asked Joshua Westfall how often the inundation would occur, he, followed by Matt Rogers explained that this was a probable rise based on assumptions.
 - Matt Rogers explained that at the March 27 Kick-Off Meeting, SH, the RPC and Consultants agreed to use 21” SLR figures. It was decided not to link SLR to a specific timeframe as SLR may occur faster or slower than estimated.

- Heather Blaikie of SH explained that this was based on current data and that this level was determined for planning purposes for possible future improvements to parks, to ensure sustainability and appropriateness of any improvements made as a result of this process.
- For clarification purposes based on SH SLR data, it is estimated that SLR will rise by 4”-8” by the 2020s and 11”-21” by the 2050s.
- Rita Shaheen of SH noted that Winding Brook Acres will soon be officially incorporated into the Black Creek Preserve. Therefore, SH requested that “Winding Brook Acres” no longer be referenced on future project maps and documents.
- Trails and Connections:
 - Marion Zimmer inquired if a stop on the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail could be established at Black Creek since the Preserve will now have improved access to the Hudson. Heather Blaikie indicated it would be an appropriate location for a stop. There was no discussion about formally adding the site to the Water Trail. Contact with the HRVG will need to be made to determine the process.
 - The existing paved access road and bridge over the Black Creek were discussed. SH indicated that paved sections of the access may be extended further into the property for increased accessibility. Railings on the existing bridge may be raised to meet standards for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Further interpretive signage and exhibits are also a possibility and would likely be done in the style of the current John Burroughs Black Creek Trail signage as this park is an important link in the system.
- Current Improvements and Structures:
 - Marion Zimmer asked if the access road from the US Rt. 9W parking lot to the new portion of the Black Creek Preserve (Winding Brook Acres) is ADA compliant and if wheelchairs could access the site. SH confirmed this.
 - Matt Rogers discussed the existing bulkhead and boat ramp area. Heather Blaikie confirmed that they will proceed with an engineering study to determine the long-term viability of the bulkhead.
 - Supervisor Harris asked if potential uses of the remaining dwelling (SH removed all of the other existing structures, except the gazebo) has been evaluated. Heather Blaikie/Rita Shaheen confirmed that SH has not formally determined what the dwelling might be used for. There was some discussion about the structure serving as a residence for a site steward.
 - Supervisor Harris asked about the abandoned in ground pool and whether this would be a good location for a future pavilion. Heather Blaikie indicated that if a pavilion is constructed, it would likely be located closer to the woods edge and out of the viewshed of the Hudson River.
 - Bathrooms:
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti asked about the possibility of adding bathrooms in the newly acquired Black Creek lands. Carol Carson-Tomassetti stated that the expanded Black Creek lands will attract more individuals and families and a bathroom would be a good idea.
 - Heather Blaikie/Rita Shaheen stated SH has not made a decision regarding a bathroom at the site.
 - The possibility of a composting toilet was discussed which may be more practical as the site may not get enough year-round use for an on-site septic system to function properly.

- Supervisor Harris asked if SH could tap into any existing sewage infrastructure. Heather Blaikie/Rita Shaheen stated that the sewage disposal systems used by the now removed cabins and dwelling are likely too small, old, and therefore insufficient to be utilized for a new restroom facility.
- Supervisor Harris asked if the septic system at the main house was the same- small and aged. Heather Blaikie/Rita Shaheen reiterated the age of the system and that a residential system may not be suitable for public usage with the intensity that may be seen at the park.
- Needed Improvements or Future Improvements:
 - Heather Blaikie briefly discussed the area north of the current gazebo on the expanded Black Creek property, and indicated this area is home to sensitive vegetation. Measures to protect the sensitive vegetation was discussed including the use of low fencing and signage.
 - Heather Blaikie stated that as of now, SH has no set plans on how the new Black Creek property will be improved. She continued that SH would prefer to keep the property open and described a number of possibilities on maintaining the open lawn area, including regular mowing, creation of a meadow, and the possibility of a pavilion and seating areas.
 - Margret Phelan supports the need for more interpretive signage.
 - Diane Dintruff read a listing of her ideas of needed improvements to the Park. She suggested the addition of bike racks and a kayak rack near the current boat launch. Additional suggestions include bike repair stations, fish cleaning stations, and drinking fountains at the site. Many RPC members felt maintenance needs and seasons would not support the longevity of fountains in the park.
 - Jim Banks said the bike repair stations were increasingly popular in the region and are being installed at the YMCA and Library.
 - The Committee discussed the bike repair station idea and concluded that they may not be practical at Black Creek.
 - Heather Blaikie said that if fish cleaning stations are desired, they would likely be located along the Black Creek as terrain inhibits adequate fishing access to the Hudson in the expanded area of the Black Creek Preserve.

Lighthouse Park

- Matt Rogers gave a brief overview of the Lighthouse Park site visit, including existing site uses, conditions, constraints, and opportunities.
- Marion Zimmer ask if SLR will be considered in all planning efforts. It was clarified that SLR must be considered in all future shoreline planning to ensure sustainability.

The following area specific comments/concerns/needs that were discussed:

- Signage and Community Promotion:
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti felt the current kiosk should be used to promote Esopus-based businesses including nearby restaurants, to visitors. It would promote local economic development. A discussion ensued as to how to determine which businesses included, or how near to the Park they would have to be.
 - Jim Banks stated that local business sponsorship may be the best way to help fund construction of the kiosks. Supervisor Harris discussed a local restaurant map that was created and asked if that would be appropriate. There was agreement that kiosks should include information on local

- businesses, including restaurants. The RPC was in agreement about the use of local business sponsorship at Town parks.
- Matt Rogers stated that other community destinations should be considered as well.
- Diane Dintruff indicated that it may be a good idea to also market to local delivery restaurants as people may want to order delivered pizza in a park.
- Heather Blaikie noted that the existing empty sign kiosk should be utilized and could feature both interpretive and community based signage.
- **Parking and Bike/Pedestrian Infrastructure:**
 - Marion Zimmer recommended a bike rack be installed and that the parking lot should be expanded.
 - Matt Rogers discussed constructing one or more accessible parking spots with an accessible path to the shoreline and to link to the existing trail at Esopus Meadows Preserve.
- **Current Conditions and Structures:**
 - The “Chester” row boat is stored in the shed. It has no other formal use at the Park.
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti and Margaret Phelan discussed the rocks located in front of the park and felt these were problematic and unsafe for those trying to launch watercraft.
 - Rita Shaheen asked if parking spaces are marked. It was confirmed that individual parking stalls are not marked. Rita Shaheen mentioned numerous methods used by Scenic Hudson and other groups to delineate parking spaces which could be incorporated into Town parks.
- **Sea Wall and Boat Launch:**
 - Marion Zimmer felt creating a seawall, and combating erosion were necessary.
 - Marion Zimmer also felt that creating a small boat launch at the site may be beneficial.
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti thought the waters to the north would be deeper and more suitable for this type of use.
- **Trails and Connections:**
 - Heather Blaikie discussed that she would like to see an ADA compliant trail that would give access to Esopus Meadows Park and bring Lighthouse Park patrons to the bridge which spans the borders of the two parks. There was agreement with this idea.
- **County-Owned Land:**
 - Matt Rogers identified a narrow lot (approx. 60’ by 283’) along the shoreline north and contiguous to Lighthouse Park owned by Ulster County. This lot could expand the park’s shoreline and provide additional areas for fishing. It was determined during the conversation that Ulster County had previously offered the lot to the Town and that the Town had apparently declined their offer. There was no information about what the price was or why the Town refused the property. After a brief discussion, no decision was made if the Town should approach the County to obtain the parcel. Further inspection of the property is needed before a final decision is made.
- **Unrelated to Lighthouse Park, but adjacent to the area:**
 - Supervisor Harris questioned those members of the WAB whom were present regarding placing a bench on a small island north of the Meadows Lighthouse, east of the Park and whether the group would be supportive. Generally, the Committee was not supportive of the idea due to unclear ownership, liability, and safety issues that may arise.

Esopus Meadows Preserve

- Matt Rogers gave a brief overview of the Esopus Meadow Preserve site visit, including existing site uses, conditions, constraints, and opportunities.
- After the introduction Matt Rogers asked if shore location improvements or a possible boat launches were needed in this location if improvements are done in Lighthouse Park. There was agreement by the Committee that no real improvements to Esopus Meadows Preserve may be necessary.
- Park, Trails and Connections:
 - It was confirmed that the park contains one ADA compliant parking spot with semi-permeable pavement.
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti asked about the partially contiguous SH-owned lands south of Esopus Meadows Preserve. Rita Shaheen said they are public, there are no official/improved trails or recreational areas on the properties.
 - Diane Dintruff described trails on the former Gordon Property, now part of the contiguous land area to the south of the park which Carol Carson-Tomassetti mentioned. Diane Dintruff stated there were nice trails on the property currently and it would be nice if they could be utilized.
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti suggested that the trails be expanded down to Hudson Lane. Rita Shaheen explained that this was the long term plan.
 - Supervisor Harris asked when this plan may be implemented. Heather Blaikie stated that due to a current backlog for SH trail builders, no new trails at Esopus Meadows would be constructed in the near future. However, partnerships between SH, the Town, and others (including the Scouts) might increase the timeframe to construct/improve the trails. No decision about a partnership was made but there was RPC support for this approach.
 - Marian Zimmer stated that what she would like the ability to walk along the river for the whole shoreline length between the northern trailhead and the beach/kayak launch at Esopus Meadows Point. Heather Blaikie discussed the difficulty of wetlands and elevation changes that would not make this possible.
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti pointed out that the overall trail network is short and they can be completed in a relatively short amount of time, Supervisor Harris agreed.

Freer Park

- Matt Rogers gave a brief overview of the Freer Park site visit, including existing site uses, conditions, constraints, and opportunities.
- Current Conditions and Structures:
 - Margaret Phelan discussed the shallowness of the water and that part of a submerged automobile can sometimes be seen at very low tide.
 - Marion Zimmer identified that some of the buildings in the park are underutilized and the Town should seek to better utilize them. Specifically, there is small lifeguard changing room (abandoned) on the southern portion of property. The large storage building at the river's edge is also underutilized.
 - Matt Rogers discussed the drainage and siltation in the immediate vicinity.
 - Diane Dintruff noted the restrooms was rarely available and always locked. Others agreed and explained the restrooms in the building with the attached kitchen is only opened when the pavilion is rented. There was agreement that the park must provide increased access to restrooms for every-day park users.

- Needed Improvements or Future Improvements:
 - Diane Dintruff recommended that the playground surface should be improved as it is only mulch now and the ground covering should be softer and more resilient to the elements.
 - Marion Zimmer recommended the former lifeguard changing building could be replaced by a small pavilion as it has excellent views. There is a paved drive leading the building and could therefore serve as an accessible location.
 - The width of the driveway and slope will need to be evaluated for safety concerns.
 - Marion Zimmer recommended that the larger southern building at the shoreline could be used to store recreational equipment and could also serve as a kayak rental shed and/or a concession stand.
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti suggested that the southern building be used for business type rentals and reserve the northern (new building) for kayak/canoe storage rentals for individuals.
 - The committee agreed the current seawall is inadequate and in need of repair.
 - Marian Zimmer suggested more formal connections to the park from Minturn and Tilden Streets be constructed. Supervisor Harris noted that these were suggested in the Park Improvement Concept Plan as Park of the Town Comprehensive Plan. There was agreement by the Committee that these connections should occur.
 - Heather Blaikie suggested a launch be added to the park which would be suitable for Chester as it is moored there. She also suggested paved ADA compliant trails within the park.

Sleightsburgh Park

- Matt Rogers gave a brief overview of the Sleightsburgh Park site visit, including existing site uses, conditions, constraints, and opportunities.
- Current Conditions and Structures:
 - Carol Carson-Tomassetti stated that it was the only nearby location to launch trailered/motorized boats at no cost. The next closest public launch is at Charles Rider Park in Ulster, an approximate 10 minute drive from Port Ewen. There is also a hand launch at Kingston Point Beach, in Kingston, approximately 5 minutes from Port Ewen.
 - Marion Zimmer stated that the existing fishing bulkhead was in poor condition and that ADA compliance at the whole site was lacking.
 - Jim Banks asked about plans for the old foundation of the former lighthouse. There was a brief discussion among the Committee. There are no plans to incorporate the foundation into the Park or encourage paddlers to access the foundation due to safety concerns.
 - Supervisor Harris stated that the Town has not encouraged use of the trails, especially across the waterways on the islands due to a drowning accident. Marion Zimmer responded that the trails should be maintained, and only those trails on the mainland portion of the park. The Committee generally agreed that select trails be improved and regularly maintained.
 - Matt Rogers asked about the adequacy of docking spaces, the committee explained the negatives with the dock as they were limited, only one to two boats could utilize the dock at a time and the need to keep the immediate launch area clear. There was a discussion about extending the dock to the west (creating an “L” shaped dock) to increase temporary mooring space.
 - Heather Blaikie had concerns about parking, especially as there was not a designated area for parking with boat trailers. There is a vegetated area in the middle of the parking lot. [Upon further inspection, this area has a plaque and flag in dedication of Warren Spinnenweber who was instrumental in establishing Sleightsburgh Park. An informational kiosk is also located in this

area. There may be an opportunity to creating additional parking/driveway area by reducing the size of the vegetated area while keeping the memorial in place. The kiosk could be relocated closer to the Rondout/near trailheads, a more logical location.]

- Needed or Future Improvements:
 - Marion Zimmer showed the group examples of ideal signage that would protect pedestrians and cyclists as it would caution drivers. There was agreement that signage should be placed at both ends of the one-lane access drive. There was also discussion about a traffic light to control use of the driveway.
 - Additional discussion ensued about opportunities to create one or more small pull-offs along the driveway. This would likely require permits from NYSDEC due to wetland impacts. There may be an opportunity for a small pull off at the western end of the driveway that would result in limited wetland impact. This is a critical issue that must be addressed going forward.
 - Dale Wolfield suggested permits for the parks boat launch and that there would need to be people there to check and ensure users have permits.
 - Marion Zimmer suggested Boardwalks throughout the park that could withstand flooding and high tides.
 - Supervisor Harris reported that she had received anonymous feedback that there needs to be more picnic tables and that the Town would provide some additional tables on a trial basis through a donation secured by the Town - the committee noted that these may turn into fish cleaning stations de-facto due to the lack of such facilities in the park. The idea of installing a fish cleaning station was discussed, similar to other parks. There was no discussion or decision made on what a fish cleaning station would include and who would be responsible for cleaning and maintaining. More discussion is necessary to determine if fish cleaning stations are practical at one or more Town parks.

North Broadway ROW

- Due to on-going negotiations with the current owner of the former Kosco Oil Terminal site, the North Broadway ROW is no longer being considered a potential new access site.

Finalization of Stakeholders and Organization /Format of the Meeting

- Matt Rogers described the Stakeholder list and the rationale Laberge Group used for creating categories. He explained that those stakeholders added by the Committee were included and asked for clarification on missing contact information.
- The Committee desired to add the following Stakeholder:
 - Kingston City School District
 - Mid-Hudson Bike Club
 - Town of Esopus Seniors
 - Atlantic Kayak Tours

Discussion of Format for the May 22 Public Meeting and Desired Outcomes

- Matt Rogers suggested providing a detailed presentation of the overall project goals and objectives, results of the site visits, and current deficiencies and opportunities at each site. This would be followed by a public question and answer session. The Committee was in agreement.

Confirm Public Outreach Processes for May 22 Public Meeting

- Matt Rogers reviewed the Draft Flyer for the Public Meeting with the Committee and outlined potential changes - the Committee was in agreement.
- It was confirmed the Public Informational meeting would be posted on Facebook and committee members would post the flyer in various locations.
- Chairwoman Ross asked when a final flyer would be available as she would like to send it to potential interested parties via email. Matt Rogers stated this will be available once revisions were made and Supervisor Harris has approved it.

Next Steps

- The next Committee meeting was scheduled June 5th, Lisa Mance noted she would not be able to attend and asked Matt Rogers if Laberge group would take notes, he indicated Joshua Westfall would be available to take notes. It was decided that the meeting date would be confirmed via email with the Committee.
- Heather Blaikie asked if there was a central location documents be housed, Mr. Rogers indicated he would be using Dropbox. [A link to the DropBox was sent to the Committee: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rh7okja2tczy955/AAC8IYiBsQ6xvyro5TuukmAia?dl=0>]

The Committee discussed the following loose ends prior to adjournment:

- Carol Carson-Tomassetti called for volunteers and handed out flyers for Chester operations for the season.
- Margaret Phelan handed out a tutorial on how to use the Hudson Valley Resource Mapper provided by Dale.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:12pm

Meeting Notes Submitted by Laberge Group June 3, 2019